

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Vestry Meeting  
2024 - monthly meeting # 2  
Date: February 27, 2024*

Draft: to be reviewed March 19

Present (virtually by Zoom):

Rev. Nina Pooley, Rector  
Josephine Ellis, (Senior) Co-Warden  
John Garinther, (Junior) Co-Warden  
Suzanne White, Treasurer  
William O'Neill, Assistant Treasurer  
Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Clerk  
James Alden  
Beth-Ann Hamling  
Caleb Harmon  
David Nevin  
Christopher Plankey  
Wendy Webster-Coakley

Regrets:

Meeting began at 7:10 P.M. via *Zoom*

There were some glitches for some members to get onto zooms then the meeting began.

**I. Opening Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley**

Luke 9: "An argument among the disciples. Jesus said:....The least among all of you is the greatest."

Prayer: "Jesus of the Way. When your friends argued, you...."

People then introduced themselves, so that the new members of the vestry would be acquainted with the others. Everyone told a story about their St. Stephen's journey and time on the *Vestry*.

Housekeeping items.

1. Josie asked about who has not had their picture taken by Jim Cawes. Bill O'Neill just had his picture taken. We should also have Biographies on the Vestry website.

For Caleb and Beth-Ann, we need to ensure that we have the complete contact information, which will go into the spreadsheet, including the best email addresses and cell phone numbers.

2. Josie Ellis then shared her screen regarding the vestry orientation for new members. There is a document from the Diocese, including videos "Vestry 101". We are legally responsible parties for the parish. We ensure that standard business methods are observed. We have minutes for all of our meetings.

We the Vestry work well together as a team. We are lucky. No horror stories. We try to be the heart and hand of Christ, and get people to know St. Stephen's as we do.

Officers have to be elected annually. The Wardens have 3-year terms. Vestry members can serve no more than 2 consecutive 3-year terms. Every year people cycle on and off.

We have monthly meetings and three primary committees: Property, Finance and Stewardship. Other areas: Children's Education, Altar Guild, Coffee Hour, Pastoral Care, and lots of things. There are committee reports so we read them ahead of time and then just discuss important things. Everyone attends the meeting and may join a committee.

Responsibilities for vestry members include: coming to church regularly. If you are going to be absent for a period, please let us know.

As the Vestry Person on Duty (VPOD), you are someone who can hear any parishioner's concerns.

Beth-Ann, we have one missing time on the VPOD schedule to ask you to fill. Everyone fills in for everyone else, if it is hard to meet a commitment.

Financial support of the church. We hope that you are a giver of record (i.e. pledge).

Rev. Nina Pooley: We have "retreats" that are extended meetings with a meal. One a year, to consider bigger conversations, big picture concerns.

Diocesan meetings, Safe Church Training.

We meet by zoom during the winter.

Jim Alden asked that all Vestry have the contact information sheet, which it turns out is already in the Vestry Folder.

The Diocese will start to send the new Vestry members their information emails.

3. We meet on the Fourth Tuesday of the Month. During *Holy Week* in March, we will meet earlier to avoid colliding with the busy week's schedule. That will be on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

Suzanne White. We are thinking of changing the Finance Meeting day to allow Sarah [Morrison] enough time to get all the information needed for that.

## **II. Clerk Report: Minutes from previous meeting**

January 22, 2023

a. corrections

1. Nina made some typo corrections, which were later finalized

b. Minutes approved (as corrected).

Motion by: Josie Ellis to approve as corrected

Seconded by: Jim Alden

Approval: unanimous

### **III. Old Business**

Action Items from Previous Meeting

Only one moot item, which was to sign up for Annual Meeting tasks.

### **IV. Committee Reports and New Business**

**Financial report** (Suzanne White)

Dining room refresh topic will be in the Property report below regarding costs to approve. John Garinther. Found a correction in the January 2024 Budget, there was one error in the Excel file: Column R uses the 2023 number instead of the 2024 column number.

Josie Ellis thanked Suzanne W. and Bill O. for providing the financial information for the Parochial Report (see the Warden's Report.)

Suzanne White: Kudos to Sarah [Morrison], she really has helped in ways to organize our finances. It only took one hour this year with her help, whereas last year it took 3 weeks! Thank you to Sarah....she can never retire!

**Stewardship** (Wendy Coakley)

Thank you Suzanne for letting everyone know how to pledge.

I sent out pledge "thank you" letters recently. It is never too late to pledge.

My last task to-do is to organize all the *Peaceful Planning* material on the website.

JosieEllis: Craig Reynolds may still help with the website part.

There are no additional pledges to report since the Annual Meeting: We stand at 83 pledges totaling \$ 208,906.

**Property Committee** (John Garinther, Chris Plankey)

Chris Plankey. Previously, we went over the Report on what to do to revamp, repair, or replace the HVAC system. They presented four options to us and we needed to clarify things at an in-person meeting. Please see through the Report.

You are all decision makers. It will be big bucks.

We proposed a fifth option. Use our existing equipment, and spend some money

to making it more reliable. Replace some things, and adds parts of other options.

David Nevin: Did you look at the possibility of just replacing the two boilers and keep other stuff as is?

Chris Plankey. It takes 10x the energy to heat by steam as by hot water. It is wasteful, and also problematic due to failures with the piping. We want to move to hot water. More efficient, more easy to repair, safer.

John Garinther. David, do you think the main problem are the boilers? It is the infrastructre, the electrical system. We'll need to replace the boilers with hot water boilers.

Rev. Nina Pooley. We are not yet at a decision-making phase yet. The Property Committee will propose the recommendations to the Vestry.

Chris Perry. What is the likely order of magnitude of final costs: 100,000, 500,000, 1 million or more?

John Garinther. The HVAC consultant couldn't estimate the costs due to the historical designation of the building and the presence of asbestos.

**Wardens' Report** ( Josie Ellis, John Garinther),  
John wrote the Warden's Report.

The Parochial Report.

Josie Ellis suggested that everyone read it and then vote on acceptance of it tomorrow.

Rev. Nina Pooley explained how the information is developed, e.g. the Red Book documenting the attendance for that week's worshipers.

There are more narrative descriptions of things in this report than in past reports.

Chris Perry suggested that we have a vote by email since some haven't been able to read the Report. We should have a vote by email.

Josie Ellis aksed: can everyone read it by tomorrow night, as we need to sign it Thursday morning?

John Garinther (Warden) and Chris Perry (clerk) will sign Thursday morning.  
**John G.:** the Winter Quarterly Newsletter is in danger of becoming a Spring Newsletter.

Chris Perry: That's Global warming!

Rev. Nina Pooley (chuckle): that was bad, if true.

Josie Ellis. Should we get through Easter and the end of March first?

Rev. Nina Pooley. We don't want to do it just to do it, as that weighed us down when it was monthly. Maybe introduce the new members, talk about the new card-writing ministry. How things are evolving.

Wendy Webster Coakley: more pictures, not too text-dense.

Josie Ellis: I am not opposed to making it lighter, or even combine winter-spring.

A general discussion ensued about how to do things, especially about getting more pictures. Sunday school, coffee hour, card-ministry were topics.

Josie Ellis: people responsible for a report next month [for the Vestry meeting], get it in early, say March 15<sup>th</sup>. The meeting may be lighter, except for the Property Committee report which may be heavier.

Rev. Nina Pooley: YPF [Young People's Fellowship] needs to do more fund-raising.

John Garinther. The *Preservation Restriction Agreement* with the City will affect our renovations, especially the Parish House. Is it covered by the historic property covenant?

Rev. Nina Pooley. There are clearly things in the Parish house that are not historic. It looks like we didn't worry about that during the last refresh, so let's consider that a precedent.

John Garinther: this Commission also provides grants, so we don't want to be cocky with them. They gave us part of the *Window Restoration* money. Don [Phipps] and I are trying to figure that out.

### Review of Recent Events and Upcoming

Young People's Fellowship Foster Care Backpack Fundraiser: 60 backpacks were assembled for Foster Care children in an afternoon fundraiser on 4 Feb that featured a showing of *The Princess Bride*. This was an event open to the public with an estimated 100 people in attendance. This event made front page news in the *Berkshire Eagle*!

Welcoming Coffee Hour: This has been moved back to the Guild Room after several

attempts to encourage more participation by holding Coffee Hour at the entrance of the sanctuary.

Several Vestry members said “good”.

Dining Room & Foyer Refresh Update: Thanks to Leah Luczynski, we have estimates for two of the major components of the refresh project:

Flooring for Dining Room, Foyer, elevator landings, first-floor hallways: \$34,313.

Dining Room new ceiling and lighting: \$21,035.

John Garinther asked whether we had already approved these expenditures.

Chris Perry and Chris Plankey then checked the previous minutes and noted that the December 2023 minutes showed that we already approved these expenditures.

Go & See 2023 (More in 2024). The parish has a costly HVAC project and a smaller refresh planned for the Foyer and Dining Room on the horizon. There are only two sources of funds available to pay for these updates: our endowment or fundraising.

Expanding what we offer through *St. Stephen's Table*.

Rev. Nina Pooley: *Go and See*, for the community around us, is going slower than anticipated. Learning what we need to do for our surrounding community is taking time.

### **Rectors Report** (Rev. Nina Pooley)

Rev Nina asked for reactions to the designed Easter and Pentacost Banners.

Chris Perry: are they for the outside of the Church?

Rev Nina Pooley: yes, the banners outside facing Park Square.

I Met with the Mayor today with other clergy. We are going to have a voice at the table with them: regarding mental health, poverty issues. We talked with the Mayor about helping shape the community. Here is what Pittsfield could be. Faith leaders try to inspire. He liked what we said and said “Can I steal that?” We weren’t siloed, but will work together.

Wendy Webster Coakley: it is early in the administration. He was an inside guy and now it is good to get to talk with him early on in the administration.

Chris Perry: too bad you didn’t get a thunder clap just as you walked into the Mayor’s office. (Some laughter)

Rev. Nina Pooley: We aren’t that important!

One last point about Vestry training. We can disagree and need to vote, we don't demand a consensus. But once something is decided, we want to show a common front, not undermine the decision.

John Garinther. This jogged my memory. See the Vestry video by Canon Simpson and Bishop Fisher. The concept of *triangulation* gets people into trouble. Pretty interesting. I recommend everyone see the video again.

From the Rector's Report Feb 2024

Upcoming

Feb 27 - Pittsfield Campus of Downtown Congregations clergy meeting with the Mayor

March 5 - Knit and Sip, 5-6:30pm

March 10 - Pastoral Care Team training/refreshers, after worship

March 12 - 6-7pm, I'm moderating a diocesan webinar with the Rev. Peter Jarrett-Schell - the author of *Reparations: A Plan for Churches*.

Holy Week:

March 24- Palm Sunday: NOT having a joint palm blessing this year.

March 26 - Diocesan Clergy Renewal of Vows, 11am Christ Church Cathedral

March 28 - Maundy Thursday service - 6pm.

March 29 - Good Friday walking stations of the cross with Cathedral of the Beloved, noon.

March 30 - Easter Vigil service, will likely begin at St. Stephen's for the "Fire" portion of the service, then proceed to Price Memorial AME next door for the "Word," then to First Methodist for the "Water" portion, and on to Zion for the Eucharist. United Church of Christ will lead the transitions from place to place and the singing. Waiting on confirmation from AME church and Methodist church before we publicize. This has been held at 7pm.

**Action Items from this Meeting:** (Chris Perry)

1. Find out whether Vestry members have to do Safe Church Training. Mostly encouraged for lay leaders.

Required if working with youth or children, or a lay Eucharistic minister.

2. Read and approve the Parochial Report

**Next Meeting scheduled:**

1. Vestry Meeting March 19, 2024

**V. Closing Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley**

Adopted from Janet Morely. "Spirit of comfort and longing enfold my fear...uncomplicate my heart and greet the dark. Amen."

**VI. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:30 P.M.